

SECTION A.
DATA HIGHLIGHTS

TRENDS IN BACHELOR'S DEGREES AWARDED TO RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITIES IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

The number of bachelor's degrees in science and engineering (S&E) fields awarded to underrepresented minority students showed robust growth in the early 1990s, after a period of relatively slow growth from 1985–90.¹ From 1990–95, the number of baccalaureate recipients with degrees in S&E increased 51 percent for blacks, 59 percent for Hispanics, and 67 percent for American Indians. The percentage increases for underrepresented minority groups were higher than the percentage increases found among white recipients (9 percent) (table A-1).

Table A-1. Science and engineering bachelor's degrees, by race/ethnicity of recipients: percentage change, 1985–90 and 1990–95

Race/ethnicity	1985–90	1990–95
White, non-Hispanics.....	–4%	9%
Asians or Pacific Islanders.....	46	50
Underrepresented minorities, total.....	10	55
Black, non-Hispanics.....	7	51
Hispanics.....	16	59
American Indians or Alaskan Natives.....	–8	67

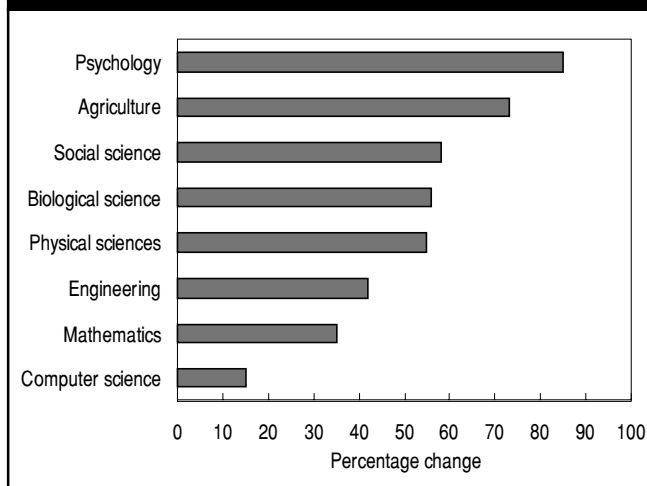
SOURCE: NSF/SRS tabulations of National Center for Education Statistics Completions Survey data

In 1995 there were similar numbers of black bachelor's degree recipients in S&E (28 thousand) and Asian recipients (29 thousand). The number of Hispanics earning bachelor's degrees in S&E fields hit an all-time high of 22 thousand, as did American Indians (more than 2 thousand).

Even with this growth, minority students still comprised 28 percent of the “college-age” population (18–24 years old) in 1995, whereas baccalaureates earned by underrepresented minority students accounted for only 13 percent of the total S&E degrees in 1995.

Among underrepresented minority groups, the increases in baccalaureate degrees vary by field of science or engineering. From 1990–95 the percentage increases in baccalaureates awarded to underrepresented groups ranged from a 15-percent increase in computer science degrees to an increase of 85 percent in psychology degrees (chart A-1).

Chart A-1. Science and engineering degrees awarded to underrepresented minorities, by field: percentage change, 1990–95



SOURCE: NSF/SRS tabulations of National Center for Education Statistics Completions Survey data

One-third of all bachelor's degree recipients of all racial/ethnic groups (except Asians, at 49 percent) chose S&E fields in 1995. Among those who majored in S&E fields in 1995, One-third of all bachelor's degree recipients of all racial/ethnic groups (except Asians, at 49 percent) chose S&E fields in 1995. Among those who majored in S&E, however, there are slight differences among racial/ethnic groups.

Degree awards have increased more in the social sciences, fields in which there is a slightly higher concentration of S&E bachelor's degree recipients among underrepresented minorities (58 percent) than among whites (53 percent).

¹ Before 1995, data were collected by race/ethnicity only for broad fields of study; in 1995 data were collected by specific fields of study.

Among S&E baccalaureate recipients in 1995, a slightly lower percentage of underrepresented minorities majored in engineering (13 percent) than did whites (15 percent), and the natural sciences (29 percent) than did whites (32 percent) (table A-2).

Although these slight differences exist, the gaps once found between the S&E field choices of underrepresented minorities and whites have virtually disappeared.

Table A-2. Percentage distribution of S&E bachelor's degree recipients, by broad S&E field: 1995			
Race/ethnicity	Engineering	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences
Underrepresented minorities.....	13%	29%	58%
Whites.....	15	32	53
Asians.....	23	38	39

SOURCE: NSF/SRS tabulations of National Center for Education Statistics Completions Survey data